



News Release

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Battling Back After Traumatic Brain Injury

Conference to Help Families and Professionals Manage Injuries

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Already this year, an estimated 1,900 Utahns have suffered life-altering brain injuries as a result of falls, car crashes, assaults, and sports-related incidents. Nearly 18%—or approximately 340—of these individuals have died as a result of their injury.

According to the Utah Department of Health (UDOH), in 2006, 2,505 Utahns suffered a traumatic brain injury (TBI) severe enough to require hospitalization. Of these, 446 (17.8%) died. With an average cost of \$29,300 for a TBI-related hospital stay, TBIs continue to take a heavy toll on individuals, families, and the community.

“The vast majority of those injured are older Utahns ages 60 and up and young males under the age of 30,” said Trisha Keller, Manager of the UDOH Violence and Injury Prevention Program (VIPP). “Most victims sustain their injuries in falls and car crashes, and the real tragedy is that most TBIs are preventable.”

Three-and-a-half years ago, Wade Justice, a radiologist and leader in the medical community, suffered a TBI when he was hit by a drunk driver. Justice endured months of therapy to learn how to walk and talk again. But the thing that surprised him most was learning to cope with the way his brain now wanted to process things.

“Being told that I may not ever practice medicine again was almost unbearable,” said Justice. In 2006 he took the first steps to returning to his profession by teaching a class on basic radiology for family practice medical residents. The class was so successful he was asked to come back for a second year and in 2007 was voted Teacher of the Year.

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“I always felt I had an inclination for teaching but never had the time to pursue it. It’s like I’ve been picked up from the ashes like a phoenix and been reborn,” he said.

Today, Dr. Justice’s determination to live life to the fullest despite a TBI has paid off. He will be the keynote speaker at the 19th Annual Brain Injury Association of Utah (BIAU) Families and Professionals Conference in Layton.

The goal of the conference is to provide education and strategies for survivors and family members, mental health specialists, health care professionals, educators, and other service providers. Topics include TBIs among returning veterans, pain management, substance abuse, mental health, natural approaches to healing, music therapy, cultural diversity, horse- and animal-assisted therapy, community access to services, and succeeding at home, school and in the workplace.

The BIAU is the only non-profit organization in Utah dedicated solely to TBI prevention and recovery. Each year, the BIAU provides services to an estimated 44,000 Utahns.

Co-sponsors of the conference include the UDOH VIPP, Division of Services for People with Disabilities, Utah State Office of Education, and Utah State Office of Rehabilitation.

To register for the BIAU Conference visit <http://www.biau.org>. Additional TBI-related data and information about Utah’s TBI Trust Fund are available at <http://www.health.utah.gov/vipp>.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.